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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY,
APRIL 24, 2003

1. This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for April 24, 2003. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

2. Radikal/Tercuman/Dunya: The Undersecretary for Customs Ministry, Nevzat Saygilioglu, announced that the border trade that would be realized through Border Trade Centers would initially be opened at the gates with Syria. Saygilioglu said border trade centers would be founded in the customs zones on an area of 2000 square meters and would mainly target trade with local businessmen and passengers. Goods belonging to both countries would be marketed at the shopping centers expected to become operational in June. The model shopping centers along the Syrian border will be opened at the gates in Cilvegozu and Yayladag (Hatay), Karkamis (Gaziantep), Oncupinar (Sanliurfa, and Nusaybin (Mardin). Such trade centers will in turn be opened at the border gates with Iran, Georgia, and Nakhichevan. Saygilioglu said Turkey expected a volume of USD 150-200 million turnover in trade at the five trade centers to be opened along the Syrian border, and added that type of trade would revive the economy and create employment opportunities in the region.

3. Evrensel: Abdullah Ocalan's sister and lawyers who went to Gemlik in order to visit Abdullah Ocalan at Imrali prison were not taken to the island by the officials on the grounds of diverse weather conditions. For the same reasons, Ocalan's sister and attorneys were denied a visit to Ocalan last week. One of Ocalan's lawyers, Aysel Tugluk, announced they had been denied the meeting with their client on the pretext of "diverse weather conditions" despite the fact the weather was clear and sunny. She added they had been prevented from seeing Ocalan for 14 weeks because of officials' decision some time ago. Urging sensitivity to the issue, attorney Tugluk demanded ending the discrimination, and the application of special anti-democratic laws against their client, calling for unrestricted practice of his democratic rights, and ending his isolation.

4. Cumhuriyet: The National Security Directorate announced 35 persons had committed suicide out of 1.7 million people detained in the past 8 years. The report said the majority of the ones who committed suicide were urban dwellers aged between 15-24. The ratio of the kind of suicide taking place in Turkey is as follows: 51 percent by hanging themselves, 17 percent by fire weapons, 13 percent by jumping from heights. 36 percent of people committing suicide have been doing so due to mental disorder. The report which also examined suicides in detention rooms between 1995-2002, announced that 35 persons had committed suicide out of 1.7 million detainees.

5. Cumhuriyet: Diyarbakir HRA Chapter's research about suicide incidents in Batman, Mardin, Siirt, Van, Elazig, Adiyaman, Sanliurfa, Tunceli, Bingol, Hakkari, Agri, Sirnak, Mus, Gaziantep, Malatya, and Diyarbakir provinces revealed the tendency to commit suicide was higher among women due to feudal pressure, domestic violence, and heavy burden of poverty. The report disclosed that women constituted 56.9 percent of 144 suicides last year, Batman taking the lead with 46, and Diyarbakir coming second with 31 cases.

ECONOMIC AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

16. Evrensel: About 250 workers protested privatization of Monopoly's Tobacco Leaf Processing Plant in Antakya. The protestors carried banners such as: "The IMF orders, the government oppresses," and "Damn IMF, independent Turkey."
HOLTZ